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Briefing memo prepared by
SA/DCI for use of DCI at
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Progress Report Under NSC 169

This Progress Report covers a variety of matters relating to radio broadcasting. By agreement with ODM, OCB reports directly to the NSC on certain sections of NSC 169 which are described below. Certain responsibilities under NSC 169 are placed on CIA. The report with respect to those items is included in the mimeographed paper. It does not include, however, reporting with respect to certain broadcasting operations for which this Agency is responsible, e.g., RFE and Radio Liberation. A parallel report on Agency broadcasting operations was prepared last fall and the substance of that parallel report has been included in the material below.

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Technical Effectiveness (Paragraphs A.2., B.6. and C.10. of Progress Report)

NSC 169 provides for the establishment in CIA of a mechanism for evaluating the technical effectiveness of US broadcasting, i.e., how well the signal can be received. A Broadcast Evaluation Section has been established

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in OSI and their first report to OCB was submitted on October 3, 1955. It has been difficult to establish the procedures, to recruit the necessary people and to work out the best method of using information received from a variety of sources. A good many of the problems involved in this undertaking will never be fully solved, e. g., the conclusions to be drawn from peripheral monitoring. The Broadcast Evaluation Section believes, however, that they are making progress in resolving these problems and that their reports to OCB will be successively more informative and valid.

Technical Planning (Paragraphs A.3., B.7. and C.11 of Progress Report)

The technical planning of US broadcasting, to insure the best use of equipment and frequencies, is handled by an OCB group known as the Technical Panel for International Broadcasting (TPIB) on which CIA is represented. Arrangements are in existence by which the technical problems of RFE and Radio Liberation are coordinated with those of overt broadcasting. This panel has been an active and effective instrument. It is the normal channel for advising with respect to radio equipment, particularly transmitters and related equipment, now held by GSA. It has not done much with regard to planning for wartime emergency conditions since assignment of responsibility for such planning has not been made clearly.

Program Effectiveness (Paragraphs A.4., B.8. and C.12 of Progress Report)

You will recall that Dr. Wilbur Schramm, under the auspices of the OCB, made an intensive study of the program effectiveness of US broadcasting in 1954. His report contained a number of recommendations for improving such broadcasting. Annexes to his report covered RFE and Radio Liberation. The OCB in turn reported to NSC in January 1955. That report was based on the Schramm study and said that the Schramm recommendations had been referred to the operating agencies to determine the extent to which they could be put into effect. The NSC requested OCB to make an interim reevaluation of the program effectiveness of broadcasting by the end of 1955. Such a reevaluation of VOA is included as annex A to the Progress Report and has been staffed out in the OCB agencies. Our people feel that USIA has made a constructive and imaginative response to the Schramm recommendations and have done as much as could reasonably be expected to carry them out.

At the time of the first OCB report in January 1955, the Director of Defense Mobilization also submitted a report in which he recommended that, unless some acceptable evidence of increased effectiveness of VOA programs to the free world could be shown, serious consideration should be given to curtail such activities. USIA reports in the present document, and our people feel that they are justified in reporting, that the time has been too short for them to obtain new evidence upon which conclusions with regard to the continuance of VOA broadcasting to the free world could be made. Some of the difficulties in this problem are enumerated in Paragraphs 8.b. and 12.

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It is proposed that further periodic reports on the program effectiveness of broadcasting will be made to NSC though everyone realizes that essentially the question of effectiveness cannot be statistically proved and must remain a matter of judgment.

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Schramm's conclusions with regard to RFE are that RFE has a mass audience in Czechoslovakia, very large audiences in Poland and Hungary and important audiences in Rumania and Bulgaria. Commenting on the programs he concludes "that so far as can be determined, RFE is doing an intelligent, imaginative and aggressive job with its mission of keeping alive the hopes, the democratic ideals, and the Western ties of the satellite peoples." Schramm commented favorably on the physical facilities of RFE. OSI made a parallel report on technical effectiveness of RFE high frequency broadcasting and found a remarkably high percentage of satisfactory reception.

Schramm's report on Radio Liberation was considerably more restrained. This was probably due to the fact that there is much less evidence with respect to Radio Liberation and probably more jamming. He concludes that Radio Liberation has a much smaller potential audience since the audience which it can hope to affect is to a considerable extent limited to members of the Government and to military forces, particularly those outside the Soviet Union. He concludes that such evidence as there is favors the view that the broadcasts are being effective. A large proportion of defectors and refugees know about Radio Liberation or have heard it. It was being openly attacked in the official press and radio which probably indicates that knowledge of the station is now widespread. A parallel study on technical effectiveness indicates that jamming has increased sharply and that while reception in some areas is poor, in others it is quite good.

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Television

NSC 169 does not relate to television but Schramm mentioned it in his report. A new working group to pull together the various aspects of both radio and television broadcasts has been set up in OCB and will shortly produce a paper on television in Europe.